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American Citizen in Peking Is Detained On Allegations That She Stole State Secrets

By FRANK CHING

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

PEKING—In what appears to be a sign of growing friction between the U.S. and China, an American woman teaching and doing research in Peking has been detained by Chinese authorities for allegedly stealing Chinese state secrets.

China's definition of state secrets covers practically anything unpublished or unannounced.

This is the first case of such gravity since the U.S. and China established diplomatic relations 3½ years ago. Those relations have deteriorated of late because of Peking's continuing dispute with Washington over U.S. military sales to Taiwan.

The woman, Lisa Wichser, 28 years old, was awakened at her hotel room in Peking at about 1 a.m. Friday and taken away in handcuffs.

An American Embassy spokesman said the embassy was informed by the Chinese of the detention Saturday and that consular officers have visited her.

The spokesman emphasized that no formal charges have been made and that Miss Wichser technically isn't under arrest but is being held for investigation. He said that Miss Wichser had requested that no personal information be disclosed.

Miss Wichser recently applied for permission to marry a Chinese graduate student in economics. It wasn't clear if her detention was related to this request or if the boyfriend had been arrested.

Friends of Miss Wichser, an economics teacher at the No. 1 Foreign Language Institute, say that as far as they knew she was engaged in academic research that would be considered normal in the U.S. One source suggested that she may have obtained cop-

ies of Chinese documents that explain the government's policy on economic reform in the agricultural sector, which is the focus of the doctoral dissertation she is working on.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "Lisa Wichser violated Chinese laws by engaging in activities that are incompatible with her status. She has been detained by our public security organ."

The disclosure of the detention came during the visit to China of Howard Baker, the Senate majority leader. It isn't known if Mr. Baker raised the matter in his meetings with Chinese leaders. He met Tuesday with Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping.

Many foreigners see Miss Wichser's detention as part of a general crackdown on Chinese-foreign relationships. The Chinese authorities are making it almost impossible for unofficial contacts between Chinese and foreigners.

Recently, some Chinese have told their foreign friends that they can no longer see them. Foreigners have been told they cannot visit Chinese friends at official institutes.

Capital Taxi Co., from which many foreigners lease cars on a monthly basis, has issued a new regulation barring drivers from working for the same foreign employer for more than three months.

Miss Wichser came to China two years ago under the auspices of the University of Denver. She expected to be able to do academic research for her doctoral dissertation at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. After her arrival, she was told that those plans weren't feasible. To stay in China, she got a teaching job.

Recently, the University of Denver had been negotiating with Liaoning University, in the northeast, for an exchange of scholars, and Miss Wichser was chosen to be the first one to do research there.